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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PPD (WALKER AND HARTLEY); IIP/G/EUR (ELLISON) AND IIP/T/SV (SEBSOW); EUR/ACE (CERIALE/FROMAN)

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SUBJECT: PD BUCHAREST'S CONFERENCE ON MUSEUM MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION, JUNE 22-25

11. SUMMARY: FROM JUNE 22-25, PD BUCHAREST HOSTED A SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR MORE THAN 90 MUSEUM DIRECTORS THAT PROMOTED REGIONAL COOPERATION AND GAVE THEM PRACTICAL IDEAS ON HOW TO THRIVE AS CIVIC INSTITUTIONS IN A MARKET ECONOMY. THE SEMINAR DIRECTOR, DR. MARC PACHTER, ENSURED THAT PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS REMAINED FOCUSED ON THE THEMES. HE USED TO GREAT EFFECT THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT-FUNDED SPEAKERS AS WELL AS THOSE SUPPORTED BY OUR CO-SPONSOR, THE FUND FOR ARTS AND CULTURE TO EDUCATE THE MUSEUM REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES ON FUNCTIONING IN A MARKET ECONOMY. THE SUCCESS OF THE SEMINAR WAS EVIDENT FROM THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM THE PARTICIPANTS - 90 PERCENT OF THEM INDICATED THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED WAS VERY USEFUL AND ADDRESSED THEIR PROBLEMS/NEEDS. SECONDLY, THE ROMANIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE'S STATE SECRETARY FOR MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS CAME TO BOTH THE EMBASSY AND TO THE FUND FOR ARTS AND CULTURE WITH A PROPOSAL TO REPEAT THE SEMINAR IN MINISTRY FACILITIES NEXT SPRING (2006). FINALLY, MEDIA COVERAGE HELPED GET IMAGES AND MESSAGES OUT TO ROMANIA'S MAJOR CITIES AS WELL AS TO NATIONAL AUDIENCES FROM BUCHAREST-BASED OUTLETS, GENERATING ADDITIONAL INTEREST AMONG THOSE WHO WERE NOT INVITED OR UNABLE TO ATTEND THE PROGRAM. PD BUCHAREST THANKS BOTH IIP AND PD SECTIONS IN THE REGION FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING SUPPORT OF THIS PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

90 PARTICIPANTS FROM 12 COUNTRIES

12. From June 22-25, PD Bucharest hosted a regional seminar with the provocative title "Do Museums Matter: Making the Case, Finding the Means." We sought to advance MPP goals in civic institution building, economic development in a free market, and promotion of regional stability. Our strategy was to help museums become more relevant to their communities and better equipped from a management standpoint to thrive in a market economy. The seminar drew a total of forty museum directors from twelve countries in the region, as well as more than fifty Romanian museum managers and GOR representatives from across the country -- many more than we expected when invitations first went out.

STRUCTURING THE SEMINAR FOR PRACTICAL RESULTS

13. Dr. Marc Pachter, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery and Acting Director of the National Museum of American History, gave the keynote address. He spoke with practiced ease and verve. He briefly outlined changes in the mission of museums from the nineteenth century until today, and ended with the current challenge: how to make museums not simply better warehouses of artifacts, but better civic institutions, capable of engaging families and other target audiences with exhibits and programming. Pachter, a SEED-funded and IIP-supported speaker, worked previously for USIA as a senior cultural advisor. He clearly understood the need for the seminar to produce practical, measurable results. Consequently, he had all the speakers share best practices and quickly get down to brass tacks on how participants might share resources and programming to better serve their communities.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUPS EXPLORE SPEAKER TOPICS

14. The seminar's format had speakers deliver talks on their area of expertise, and then lead informal discussion groups where participants could air specific problems, brainstorm solutions, and explore joint activities. An excellent speaker/group leader was Dr. Graham Beal, the Director of the Detroit Institute of Art, and our second IIP-supported, SEED-funded, speaker. Participant exchanges in Beal's group focused on finding new sources of funding and other resources (e.g., free utilities, in-kind contributions) as well as on several other issues.

ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS PROVIDED BY THE FUND FOR ARTS AND

CULTURE

15. The Fund for Arts and Culture which co-funded this event brought three additional speakers at its own expense. They also provided high quality contributions to the program. The first, Mr. Patrick Gallagher, is the president of a leading U.S. design firm with long experience in mounting permanent and temporary exhibits. He spoke fluently on everything from structuring visitor evaluation forms to creatively reusing aging display and exhibition equipment to maximize cost savings. Gallagher, together with a second Fund-supported speaker, Mr. Klaus Muller, a museum designer and architect from Amsterdam, gave an outstanding demonstration of how museums can engage an audience that is indifferent or possibly hostile to a given exhibition theme. Muller is currently at work on a Dutch museum memorializing gays and lesbians persecuted during the Nazi era. The museum's target audience -- high school students -- includes many Muslims who are generally unsympathetic to homosexuals. Between Muller's architectural expertise, and Gallagher's knowledge of design, they walked the audience through conceptualization of the exhibit -- from the venue, to the way the story of these people was told so as to universalize their experiences of betrayal, arrest, escape, survival, or dehumanization and death -- and helped the speakers themselves conceptualize the exhibit. The seminar participants, many of whom were not favorably disposed to this theme, were nevertheless impressed with the effort and left with food for thought on how they might mount politically difficult exhibits that would nevertheless draw crowds.

STATE-SPONSORED INSTITUTIONS SUCCEEDING IN SPITE OF BURDENSOME RESTRICTIONS

16. Miguel Fernandez, Director of Mexico's Museum of the Viceroyalty, was the final Fund-supported speaker. His topic was how to mobilize and motivate museum staff to produce exhibits that draw larger audiences without new objects or significant new funds. Fernandez has had notable success in revitalizing his state-supported museum despite flat budgets, restrictive labor laws, and a bureaucracy that is often part of the problem. His presentation resonated with many of the seminar participants who face similar difficulties in their home countries where state financing comes with a raft of unhelpful regulations and limitations. Fernandez pursued potential solutions to these problems in his discussion group, overcoming limitations in his command of English with the help of Marc Pachter.

RESULTS

17. PD Bucharest ran the overall program, but our co-sponsor, The Fund for Arts and Culture, supplied the talent for the substantive elements for this highly successful seminar. We found the presentations of these consultants to be uniformly outstanding. The seminar leaders demonstrated that, at least in the seminar's structured environment, this region's museums can work together to solve mutual problems, share success formulas, and brainstorm joint projects of mutual benefit. The participants got right to work, little time was lost "ice-breaking," and many wanted a follow-up conference to focus in greater depth on specifics such as fund-raising and grant writing. After hearing of the success of "Friends of the Museum Associations" from Romanians who developed such groups under a previous grant from PD Bucharest, most participants agreed that this was one concrete step they would pursue upon return to their home countries.

18. The Romanian Ministry of Culture offered its unconditional support from the very beginning for this colloquium. The Ministry of Culture's Secretary of State, Virgil Nitulescu, who spoke at the opening session, had invited his counterparts to participate in the conference, and several accepted his invitation. The Ministry of Culture also put at the conference's disposal its main conference room for the presentation of an IT project called "Ethnography on Line", which was created by Romanian Village Museum for local use. The colloquium only strengthened the initiative and will to transform this IT project into a regional IT tool of cooperation in this domain. The enthusiasm of participants and the success of the seminar, which was obvious even before the end of its debates, also lead to the idea, proposed by the Ministry of Culture, that a similar event be held next year.

19. In Romania, PD was able to generate much press for the conference. The cultural TV station TVRM, a major financial daily Ziarul Financiar (cir.35,000), the cultural magazine Flacara, and Romanian state television RTV all extensively featured the conference in their

reporting. The correspondent to Romania for the South-East European Times is working from the material dedicated to the event for an article that will run regionally. And, the Dow-Jones correspondent to Romania also interviewed PAO Mark Wentworth and speaker Marc Pachter and we are expecting an article to run on their service in the near future.

110. COMMENT:

-- PD Bucharest highly recommends IIP-supported speakers Marc Pachter and Graham Beal to the Department and other posts for any museum-related programming. Both are easy-going, practiced, engaging presenters, who are readily approachable and concerned to fit their presentations to the needs of seminar participants.

-- PD Bucharest would be pleased to share in greater detail the planning and organizational details, as well as other materials produced for the conference with interested posts. Please contact Cultural Assistant Isabella Alexandrescu (alexandrescuI@state.gov) or PAO Mark Wentworth (Wentworthm@state.gov) if interested.

-- We greatly appreciate cooperation from staff of posts which sent participants and made this such a success. We would also welcome posts' feedback once they have a chance to debrief conference participants. END COMMENT.
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